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(Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said strain is capable of producing both vanillic acid and vanillin from ferulic acid, the ratio thereof being pH-dependent; and wherein a pH is selected and maintained which relatively favors accumulation of vanillic.

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(Amended) A method according to claim ⁸/~~47~~ wherein said plant material is selected from the group consisting of maize, wheat, sugar beet and rice materials.

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(Twice Amended) A method according to claim ⁸/~~47~~ wherein in step (a) the plant material is treated with a solution containing citric acid.

15/10

(Amended) A method according to claim ^{14/10}/~~9~~ wherein said plant material is treated in the temperature range 50-250°C.

B6 16/1

(Amended) A method according to claim ⁸/~~47~~ wherein the plant material comprises sugar beet fibre and step (a) comprises heating in water.

4/12

(Twice Amended) A method according to claim ³/~~6~~ wherein said enzyme composition having ferulic acid esterase activity is one derived from species of *Aspergillus* or from *Humicola insolens*.

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5 13. (Amended) A method according to claim 12 wherein the enzyme is derived from *Humicola insolens* and treatment is effected in the pH range 6-7.

6 21. (Twice Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said conversion into vanillin is effected in an aqueous phase which is contacted with an organic phase which extracts said vanillin.

A marked-up copy of the presently-amended claims is submitted herewith.

Add new claims 46-53, as follows:

7 46. (New) A method of converting a first composition comprising ferulic acid into a second composition comprising vanillin, said method comprising treating said first composition with a strain of *Pseudomonas putida* under conditions such that ferulic acid is converted into vanillin, and the vanillin accumulates in the culture medium wherein said strain is capable of producing both vanillic acid and vanillin from ferulic acid, the ratio thereof being pH-dependent; and wherein a pH is selected and maintained which relatively favours accumulation of vanillin.

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~~47~~. (New) A method according to claim ~~46~~ wherein said selected pH is greater than 8.0.

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~~48~~. (New) A method according to claim ~~47~~ wherein said selected pH is about pH 8.5.

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~~49~~. (New) A method of producing a composition containing vanillin from a plant material, said process comprising a preliminary step of obtaining a first composition comprising ferulic acid from a plant material by a process comprising:

- a. treating the plant material to produce a solution containing a ferulic acid ester; and
- b. treating said solution with an enzyme composition having ferulic acid esterase activity under conditions such that ferulic acid esters are converted into ferulic acid; and

a subsequent step of converting said first composition comprising ferulic acid into a second composition comprising vanillin, said subsequent step comprising treating said first composition with *Pseudomonas putida* under conditions such that ferulic acid is converted into vanillin, and the vanillin accumulates in the culture medium.

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50. (New) A method according to claim ~~49~~¹⁷ wherein said strain is *Pseudomonas putida* IMI382568.

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51. (New) A method according to claim ~~49~~¹⁷ wherein said strain is capable of producing both vanillic acid and vanillin from ferulic acid, the ratio thereof being pH-dependent; and wherein a pH is selected and maintained which relatively favours accumulation of vanillin.

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52. (New) A method according to claim ~~46~~⁷ wherein said conversion into vanillin is effected in an aqueous phase which is contacted with an organic phase which extracts said vanillin.

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53. (New) A method according to claim ~~49~~¹⁷ wherein said conversion into vanillin is effected in an aqueous phase which is contacted with an organic phase which extracts said vanillin.

Cancel claims 22 and 23.

REMARKS

The November 6, 2002 Official Action and the references cited therein have been carefully considered. In view of the present amendments and the following remarks, favorable